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ABSTRACT

A study examined two upper elementary classrooms efforts to incorporate experiential democratic citizenship into the life of each classroom. A major research question guiding the study was: what are the characteristics of an elementary classroom that values civic participation? The assertion generated from the findings and attentive to this question was that in classrooms where democratic elements such as providing student choice, shared responsibility and decision making, and opportunities for student civic participation are present, students begin to accept more responsibility for their immediate community. The cross case analyses of the data from each classroom indicated that the strength to which the civil characteristics exist may depend on classroom structure, use of a common vocabulary, and repetition of structure, characteristics, and vocabulary. Contains 36 references. (BT)

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Preparing Active and Informed Citizens: A Qualitative Study of Two Elementary Classrooms

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Preparing Active and Informed Citizens:
A Qualitative Study of Two Elementary Classrooms

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on a portion of the results of a doctoral dissertation and includes an examination of two upper elementary classrooms and their attempts to incorporate experiential democratic citizenship into the life of each classroom. One major research question guiding the study was, what are the characteristics of an elementary classroom that values civic participation? The assertion generated from the findings and attentive to this question was that in classrooms where democratic elements such as providing student choice, shared responsibility, shared decision-making, and deliberate opportunities for student civic participation are present, students begin to accept more responsibility for their immediate community. The cross case analyses of the data from each classroom indicates that the strength to which the characteristics of assertion one are present may depend on the teacher's deliberate attempts to create more structure, use of a common vocabulary, and repetition of structure, characteristics, and vocabulary.

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this research study was to determine if specific qualities and characteristics of democratic elementary classrooms might motivate students to become participatory citizens. Two geographically and ethnically diverse self-contained elementary classrooms were identified by the researcher as possessing democratic elements. These classrooms were examined to see if any unique qualities or characteristics in these classrooms might motivate the students to become more active and participatory citizens in their classrooms, schools, and wider communities. Democratic classrooms contain opportunities for decision-making and student participation, as well as defined responsibilities and consequences of not fulfilling one's responsibilities (VanSickle, 1983, p. 49). The daily bombardment of news stories that reinforce what appears to be a lack of caring or a lack of responsibility to fellow humans, to the environment, and often to ourselves, should cause concern for all. What, then, should be done? How can a sense of responsibility to serve, to care for, to participate in one's communities be instilled? Many believe that civic education is at least a part of the answer (Butts, 1988; Dynneson, & Gross, 1991; White, 1996; Woyach, 1991). The education of citizens, preparing these young people to fulfill the rights and duties of the office of citizen, is in part the

responsibility of social studies education, as democratic citizenship education (i.e. civic education) is its primary purpose.

Social studies education grew out of the Progressive movement and was heavily influenced by the philosophy of John Dewey. Active participation by the citizens of a democratic society was promoted by Dewey, as was his belief that education in such a society must give its citizens a personal stake in their society. Dewey promoted the development of the "habits of mind" (Dewey, 1916/1944, p. 99) to affect necessary social change. Social studies has been charged with the primary responsibility of educating effective democratic citizens (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977; Engle & Ochoa, 1988; National Council for the Social Studies, 1992; Parker & Jarolimek, 1984). Effective democratic citizens (i.e., good citizens) are defined as citizens who are not just patriotic and law-obeying, but also those who are informed critics of the nation and participate in its improvement (Engle & Ochoa, 1988). While voting, knowing the Pledge of Allegiance and obeying the laws of the nation and community are all important, the democratic form of government requires for its success the reasoned, rational and educated participation of its citizens. According to George Wood (1988, p. 169), democracy is, in essence, "...a way of living in which we collectively deliberate over our shared problems and prospects." In preparation for this deliberation and participation, students must have access not only to content knowledge, but opportunities to critically evaluate and use that knowledge and actively practice citizenship skills. The creation of a democratic and participatory environment within a classroom may be one way of providing experiential citizenship education. In such an environment, students are given a sense of worth and membership through practice opportunities (Angell, 1991).

Theorists and researchers concur that there is a need for research in the area of citizenship education, and to specifically see what democratic citizenship looks like in the classroom (Angell, 1991; National Council for the Social Studies, 1992; van Sledright & Grant, 1994). Van Sledright and Grant, whose study of three classrooms focused on the difficulties of creating a democratic classroom environment in a decidedly undemocratic educational system, remark on the need for research in three specific areas. First, they call for additional context-specific classroom studies to provide descriptions of citizenship

education in practice. Second, van Sledright and Grant propose additional effort in terms of both empirical and theoretical studies in citizenship education to provide a specific grounded theory. Third, conversations from a variety of perspectives are needed to discuss the meanings and applications of citizenship.

The Research Questions

The principal research question is: What are the qualities and characteristics of a democratic elementary classroom in which students develop the motivation to civically participate beyond the classroom? Guiding research questions include:

1. What are the characteristics of an elementary classroom that values civic participation?

    1a. What democratic elements are evident in the classroom structure?

    1b. How do students interact with the teacher and with one another in ways that reflect the democratic nature of the classroom?

    1c. How, and by whom, are opportunities for civic participation introduced?

RELEVANT LITERATURE

There has been little research on civic education methods, particularly on methods related to civic participation (Wade, 1995). For this reason, it becomes necessary to explore related areas of literature. Parker and Kaltsounis (1986) reviewed research related to citizenship and law-related education, finding that research in this area generally falls into one of four categories: political socialization, cognitive development, moral development, and classroom climate. Political socialization and classroom climate are briefly reviewed here as they more closely relate to the guiding research questions addressing civic participation and the classroom environment in which students in this study learn about citizenship. Research related to school climate is also introduced.

Political Socialization

Political socialization may be generally defined as the acquisition of political values, attitudes, and behaviors (Ichilov, 1990). Research in political socialization has consistently concluded that the school has a major impact on the political socialization of children (Ehman, 1980; Hepburn, 1983; Hess & Torney, 1967; and Oppenheim, Torney, & Farnen, 1975). A concern, however, is that most of the published research is fairly dated. There has been little new research in the political socialization of children in the

United States in the last 20 years, partially due to a lack of significant findings and the complexity of the topic (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995; Torney-Purta, 1992). Ehman's comprehensive review (1980) included research from the 1960s and 1970s into political socialization in American schools, and his review continues to be frequently cited (Angell, 1991; Blankenship, 1990; Hahn & Tocci, 1990; Harwood, 1992; Parker & Kaltsounis, 1986; Wade, 1995). Ehman's (1980) review concludes that the transmission of political knowledge occurs through the schooling process; however, political attitudes do not seem to be greatly influenced by a traditional social studies curriculum. Both the teacher, through the establishment of an open classroom climate, and the school climate may positively influence student attitudes and behavior.

Classroom Climate

Classroom climate refers to the ways that teaching is carried out and can vary from open climates to closed climates (Ehman, 1980, p. 108) or from democratic to undemocratic (VanSickle, 1983, p.52). Open or democratic climates are characterized as those where students have a say in both the structure and management of the classroom and feel comfortable enough to discuss controversial topics. Closed climate or undemocratic classrooms are those where students do not have these opportunities. Research indicates that students who perceive they are learning in an open classroom climate indicate more positive political attitudes and a stronger sense of political efficacy (Blankenship, 1990; Chilcoat & Ligon, 1994; Ehman, 1980; Hahn & Tocci, 1990; Harwood, 1992; VanSickle, 1983). Positive political attitudes can include specific attitudes toward civil liberties, the democratic process, law, and politicians. Political confidence can includes faith and belief in a particular system or elected official.

School Climate

Every teacher and student in a school operate within the context of that school; and the principal is the major factor in establishing school climate (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Porter, Lemon, Landry, 1989). How the principal decides how and if power will be shared; the ability and willingness to provide necessary information and resources; and leadership styles all influence school climate, which influences classroom climate (Blase & Blase, 1997; Ehman, 1980).

METHODOLOGY

Under the framework of a constructivist/interpretivist perspective, and in consideration of the research questions, an ethnographic approach was deemed appropriate to this study as the description of cultures [democratic classrooms] was the primary goal (Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1993). Data collected during the 1996-1997 school year included the researcher's fieldnotes, interviews, artifacts, and archival data. Each classroom under study was considered a separate case and each case was a separate unit of analysis. Both within- and cross-case analysis were used to analyze the multiple sources of data as the researcher inductively looked for patterns, themes, and categories (Patton, 1990).

FINDINGS

A major assertion that emerged from the data analyses was that in classrooms where democratic elements such as providing student choice, shared responsibility, shared decision-making, and deliberate opportunities for student civic participation are present, students are beginning to accept more responsibility for their immediate community. This assertion, present in both classrooms, focuses on the climate that the teacher sets in the classroom by allowing and encouraging students to become important stakeholders in decisions that are important to them.

Student choice is presented both deliberately and with less deliberate intent in the classrooms under study. Deliberate choice is exemplified when the teacher structures a situation that requires student choice and/or the teacher's language specifically presents the opportunity for student choice. Less deliberately structured opportunities for choice are presented casually and tend to consist of comments to individual students.

A sense of shared responsibility is also a part of this assertion and is presented to the students with a sense of community spirit. This is exemplified by the teacher and students sharing responsibility for classroom management, helping themselves and one another learn, and accepting responsibility for others in the community. Both teachers

nurture this attitude of shared responsibility with the use of specific community building activities.

Shared decision-making is similar to shared responsibility, but focuses on behavior or skills to be practiced. Although not witnessed frequently, examples appear to be important, most notably the establishment of classroom rules [class constitution]. Student involvement in establishing classroom rules was mentioned in nine of ten group interviews with students when asked if they believed they had a say in what went on in their classroom. Students also partake in academic shared decision-making, contributing to assessment and assessment criteria. Other decision-making opportunities include discussing class room arrangement and daily and weekly schedules.

The final part of this assertion includes those instances in which the teacher deliberately creates an opportunity for students to become participants in civic life. Service-learning, a "method by which young people learn and develop through active participation...[to] meet actual community needs" (Alliance for Service-Learning Education Reform) is the method to which both teachers subscribe when encouraging the active participation of their students in community life. While multiple examples exist in both classes, a common project is the work with a younger buddy class.

The existence of these categories is because Mr. L. and Mrs. R. believe that citizenship education includes student interaction and student involvement (Mr. L. interview #1, 9/10/96, interview #2, 9/27/96; Mrs. R. interview, 2/26/97). These categories emerged and exist because the teachers allow and/or encourage these opportunities. An attempt to instill commitment to one's community is pervasive as students practice making wise choices, being responsible, and being active. The following section details the a day in each of the classrooms under study. The above-described categories should be apparent.

THE CASE STUDIES

Case Number One: A Day in Room 11, Mr. L.'s Classroom

By 8:05 a.m. several students are on the upper grades' playground area chatting or playing. Mr. Valdez (the principal), a few teachers, and the playground aides are around, talking with students and supervising the activities. Off to the side of the playground in the

picnic/lunch area, several parents who have brought their children to school this morning are chatting. There were some concerns about a previous principal several years ago, and since that time parents are a large presence at the school, and are very involved (fieldnotes, 9/6/96 & Mr. Valdez interview, 9/20/96). It is common to see several parents around the school before and after school, but many parents volunteer time during school hours to help in various classrooms.

Down in room 11, Brenda is working, and when asked about her task, replies that Mr. L. asked her to copy some notes from the previous day's discussion on the class constitution (fieldnotes, 9/6/96). It is typical in the mornings to find one or more of the room 11 students performing a task at the request of Mr. L. Sometimes it is stapling papers, preparing charts, putting up bulletin boards, or any number of things. Students seem comfortable with this, and some say it is better than being on the playground because as sixth graders, they find themselves bored (student interview #4, 9/26/96).

The first bell rings at 8:15 a.m. and students "freeze" in place, waiting for playground equipment to be returned and the aide to blow the whistle to line up. Students in each class proceed to a pre-determined spot on the playground to line up and wait for their respective teachers. No class proceeds to their classroom until escorted by their teacher. Mr. L.'s bi-lingual sixth grade class is lined up in two lines. On the first day of school, Mr. L. offered a choice to his students of their preference of one line or two. The chorus of "two" won and Mr. L. agreed that he also liked two lines (fieldnotes, 9/3/96). This particular morning, Mr. C., the student teacher, brings the students to the room and follows behind the two lines. Following from behind is typical of most teachers at Las Flores and is encouraged by Mr. Valdez who believes that following behind the students is an effective way to monitor behavior (fieldnotes, 9/18/96).

As students enter room 11, each one stops at the door to move their assigned clothespin from their name slot to their lunch choice. This process was explained on the first day and is standard procedure. Stephanie is then able to take attendance and do the lunch count, one of her classroom jobs. Stephanie also works in Mrs. Gonzalez's classroom helping the teacher with a variety of tasks. She says she chose this particular job because she likes Mrs. Gonzalez and she might want to be a teacher in the future so

this is good practice (student interview #2, 9/26/96). Comments of a job being fun or somehow beneficial to a student's future are a common part of their job choice rationale. Several other students are passing out papers or collecting assignments. Although a few students have requested paper passing as a job, Mr. L. often asks for volunteers and with several raised hands, Mr. L. chooses helpers. While this administrative work is going on, there is a note on the chalkboard: "While you're waiting, work on report." This refers to the Ancient Greece report assigned the first day of school. Today's directions include several 5" x 8" note cards with note-taking directions (fieldnotes, 9/4/96). Most students are busily working and there is some quiet conversation. Once the administrative work is done, Mr. L. asks, "Have we forgotten anything?" Someone remarks that they have forgotten to say the Pledge of Allegiance, and the class proceeds to recite the Pledge (fieldnotes, 9/3/96).

Social studies is the first academic scheduled for the day, and Mr. L. begins with a brief lecture on the three ages of Ancient Greece. The study of Ancient Greece is part of the mandated social studies curriculum for sixth grade and prior to beginning an in-depth study, Mr. L. spoke with the students about the rationale for this particular topic and how they will be studying it (fieldnotes, 9/3/96). In sum, Mr. L. told the students that their study will allow the students to inform others about Ancient Greece and its influence on their world. As the lecture begins, three students, Junior, Daniel, and Juan, leave the classroom and go to Mrs. Canter's first grade classroom for their scheduled 30 minutes. These three boys, along with six girls, have chosen to make their classroom job that of helping Mrs. Canter with her Spanish speaking students. All nine of the students who volunteered to work with Mrs. Canter are Spanish speakers, which was a job requirement. Student choice of this job is consistent with Mr. L.'s directive to the students that there are an "...infinite number of jobs in every community...choose your community and decide how you can help" (fieldnotes, 9/6/96). Many jobs are left for the students to determine; however, Mr. L. does advise students of jobs previous classes have explored or mentions particular needs. Mrs. Canter mentioned to Mr. L. that she needed help with her class in the mornings while she works with small groups. Mr. L. then asked his students if there was any interest. Those students helping in Mrs. Canter's room essentially express

the same job rationales as Stephanie. They find the job fun, it helps them with their own language skills, it gets them out of class, or they want to be teachers (fieldnotes, 9/24/96; student interviews #1, 9/25/96 & #3, 9/26/96). In general, job choice appears to be self-serving. This opportunity to volunteer is a definite part of Mr. L.'s citizenship education program and consistent with the school district "Citizen Education" policy, which states, "...citizen education involves providing students opportunities for valuable service to their community..." (artifact collection, Citizen Education Committee Report, 2/29/96, p.1). Mr. L. was a major contributor to the district policy, and although it is still under development, it appears that it will be very reflective of Mr. L.'s experiences at the *Ackerman Center*, a two week intensive teacher's institute that encourages teachers to develop active citizenship in their classrooms and schools.

Allowing students to leave the classroom during lessons to perform their jobs, such as the first grade helpers or those students working in the garden, continues to be a dilemma for Mr. L. (fieldnotes, 9/19/96). He has concerns about whether these opportunities meet the requirements for service-learning (a methodology for active citizenship) because they do not have a structured reflection component, although adding this component could be accomplished. Reflection is a standard part of the second grade reading buddy class project, as students either orally discuss or journal their thoughts about working with the after each visit. Mr. L. has less reservations about meeting the academic component of service-learning, especially with those students in the first grade classroom who are acting as academic tutors. Mr. L. believes, however, that parents may not see the academic benefits. This concern about academics is also expressed because some of the classroom jobs take students out of the classroom during instruction time. An additional concern about the students coming and going from the classroom to participate in these opportunities is that it may be a distraction to Mr. L. and the other students. Mr. L. believes that this potential for distraction, as well as his academic concerns, requires his constant monitoring of some of the classroom jobs (interview #2, 9/27/96).

Back in the classroom, Mr. L. finishes his lecture on Ancient Greece and asks how students would prefer to use the time until recess, reading Greek myths or working on the

report that is due at the end of the week. A hand count indicates that they want to work on reports and students busy themselves (fieldnotes, 9/5/96). While students work, Mr. L. addresses individual student questions. In many cases, Mr. L. responds with answers that require a student decision, such as, "I'll let you decide," "Whatever you think is best" (fieldnotes, 9/10/96), and "It's up to you" (fieldnotes, 9/16/96). At one point during this period, one of the students gets up to get a drink from the water fountain in the classroom and leaves the water running. Mr. L. waits for a few moments to see if anyone addresses the problem. With no action, Mr. L. asks Ralph, who sits near the fountain, if he will be responsible for monitoring the fountain. Ralph agrees (fieldnotes, 9/5/96). Mr. Valdez stops by the room, and observes from the door. He says nothing and leaves in a few minutes (fieldnotes, 9/17/96). As questions subside, Mr. L. calls up the garden committee who have been having some organizational difficulties. He tells them that it is up to them to decide what they want to do with the school garden this year; but first they must decide their goals and purpose for the garden. He gives some examples, such as certain items being planted for specific reasons, sunflowers for beauty and lettuce for food. He also tells them that one purpose can be for a project with the buddy class, teaching them how to garden. Specifically, the students are told that the purpose of the garden is for service-learning and that they [the students] must examine that purpose and how they wish to plan the year (fieldnotes, 9/18/96). This is an important conversation with these students, as they have been floundering somewhat in the garden. They have been spending morning and lunch recess in the garden, making little progress, half-heartedly turning over dirt and pulling weeds, but with little direction or purpose. Even after this conversation, the garden does not move ahead until two parents begin volunteering their time to direct and supervise the students. Over the following several months, the garden gains structure and students working on the committee change as those with less dedication decrease their participation and other students take over leadership (Mr. L., 4/19/97).

Students in the class are busy on their Greek reports until recess, at which time they line up in two lines and proceed to the playground. Before recess dismissal, Mr. L. tells the students that those who gave themselves below a "5" (scores range from 0 to 9) on last week's homework packet are to get their packet and bench themselves to work on

their incomplete or incorrect homework (fieldnotes, 9/23/96). The homework packet is distributed every Monday morning and contains an explanation of the week's homework assignments, worksheets, and project directions, and usually a few words of wisdom from Mr. L. (Room 11 artifact collection). When returned on Friday, the packet is to be complete, with a parent signature. During the "Back to School Night" visitation, those parents attending commented that they liked having the packet for the entire week, as well as the amount of homework assigned (fieldnotes, 9/12/96). Students routinely participate in assessment of their homework packet and daily work and this request for students to bench themselves, based on their own assessment, does not appear to be much of a surprise to students. On the playground, there are several equipment and game options. Students occupy their time with these activities, working on homework, or visiting with one another. They also have the option of using recess as snack time, and several students have chosen to sit at the picnic tables. Recess ends and students follow the "freeze" and line up procedure. Mr. L. brings the students back into the room, and as they settle he tells them to clear their desks and prepare for math. Mr. L. teaches a lesson on multiplying decimals. During the lesson, students solve sample problems and at various times Mr. L. asks students to check one another's work, his work, help their neighbor with any difficulties, or explain the problem to a neighbor (fieldnotes, 9/11/96 & 9/19/96). Mr. L. uses this technique frequently in the academic disciplines and believes that it contributes to the sense of community he strives to create by encouraging responsibility to one another (interview #2, 9/27/96). After the math lesson, the homework assignment is made and students are told they can work on any of the math assignments in this week's homework packet. In this instance, students are offered the choice, but without the deliberate language that was used for the morning social studies assignment (fieldnotes, 9/17/96). One option is a practice test over the math concepts they have been studying. Mr. L. previously told the students that there were a variety of ways to study, that some students would only need to study at school, while others would also have to study at home. He is deliberate in this conversation and told the students that it was an individual decision, and they must decide the best way to prepare. Mr. L. also explained the reason

for using a multiple-choice test: standardized tests in the spring are multiple-choice, and this was practice (fieldnotes, 9/24/96).

While most students are doing their seatwork, Mr. L. uses this time to re-teach the math lesson in Spanish to the non-English speaking students. They work at a small table in the front of the room where Mr. L. can work with this group, as well as being able to see the rest of the class so that their questions can be addressed and behavior monitored. Lunch dismissal includes the standard line-up procedure with Mr. L. following the students from behind. As students finish lunch, they move onto the playground for 15 to 20 minutes. Several girls on the garden committee, with the researcher as their adult supervisor, proceed down to the garden to work. The students grab either a rake or hoe and work at removing weeds. They seem to enjoy this time, talking with one another, but getting little accomplished. Brenda says she has chosen to work in the garden because it is fun and she could not help last year because she had a different teacher who did not participate in the garden project (fieldnotes, 9/12/96). Believing that working in the garden is fun is the main reason all of these girls have chosen it as their job.

As lunch recess ends, students on the playground line up and the girls in the garden begin clean up. Back in the room, the afternoon is spent on language arts. The first book this year is *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, a futuristic tale of a community characterized by conformity. Mr. L. chose this book at the suggestion of the school librarian, but said as soon as he began to read it, he saw a connection to citizenship (fieldnotes, 9/5/96). Today's chapter is about the concept of "Sameness," and how there are no opportunities for individual thought, appearance, or action in the community. After the chapter is read aloud, Mr. L. asks if the students see any advantage to "Sameness." Daryl says that you would not have to worry at school about being different; and Ralph says there would be no prejudice (fieldnotes, 9/25/96). This discussion is typical, and Mr. L. usually pauses at some point during the chapter, or after they have finished the day's reading, to ask a question which in some way compares their (i.e., the students') community to the community in the book. During the reading of this book, they have talked about general comparisons, definitions of citizen, rules, and, volunteering (fieldnotes, 9/4/96, 9/5/96, 9/9/96, 9/11/96). This opportunity for comparison is consistent with Mr. L.'s belief about

what his citizenship education program is like. He does not believe that citizenship education should be a separate part of the curriculum, taught during a particular time of day, but should instead be a "mindset" for the teacher and should affect everything done in the classroom (interview #2, 9/27/96 & 4/19/97). Mr. L. worries that this may make citizenship education appear incoherent or inconsistent because it is not taught separately or distinctly, but is infused throughout the curriculum. He does believe this approach is the best one for him.

After *The Giver*, Mr. L. directs the students to retrieve a picture poem poster assignment they worked on yesterday. Mr. L. tells the class that they are going to help come up with the criteria to grade this assignment (fieldnotes, 9/16/96). Students have had a few experiences with creating scoring rubrics; and, Mr. L. believes that student participation in assessment is an important part of decision-making. Mr. L. asks for criteria suggestions and students volunteer "correct compound sentence," "neat," "creative," and "appropriate size". A few additional suggestions are discussed and once the final criteria are agreed upon, Mr. L. asks the students to give themselves an "E," "G," "S," or "N" (4 to 1 points) for each criteria. After finding their average, students are asked to trade with one another to check the math and evaluate whether or not the students have graded themselves fairly. After this is done and the poem posters turned in, students prepare for a spelling test. Mr. C., the student teacher, administers the test and when done, students grade their own papers (fieldnotes, 9/9/96). To encourage honesty, students are required to put away pencils and get out a crayon of a specified color to grade the papers. Once corrected, the spelling tests are turned in and a student grader (classroom job) records the scores. The last language arts assignment introduced is Sustained Silent Reading, a required part of the curriculum. Mr. L. directs students to the story, and corresponding pages in their workbooks with instructions to work quietly (9/11/96). Both Mr. L. and Mr. C. walk around the room answering questions and giving feedback. Part way through this period, as the noise has started to pick up, Mr. L. stops the class and says, "Take stock of what you have accomplished in the last 15 minutes" (fieldnotes, 9/19/96). Mr. L. rarely directly tells the students to quiet down, but instead

puts the responsibility on the students by asking them to evaluate what they have been doing. This usually works and those students distracted return to work.

With just a few minutes left in the day, Mr. L. calls a class meeting (9/16/96). These meetings typically consist of Mr. L. passing out and explaining certain items which need to go home. Some items need signatures and returned, others are informational. He specifically tells students that there is a consequence to not returning the required items, namely, being benched during recess. Once all of the items are passed out, Mr. L. asks the students if they have anything they wish to bring up. Anna raises her hand and wants to talk about the ice cream fund-raiser for the sixth grade trip. It is briefly discussed and Anna and Luann (whose mother is coordinating the fund-raiser) exchange telephone numbers so their mothers can talk. With no other items, students are directed to get everything ready and wait for school dismissal at 2:25 p.m.

A Day in Room 23, Mrs. R.'s Classroom

Students at Charles Lindbergh Elementary School stay on the playground until the first bell at 8:20 a.m. At that time, they line up on the playground in an assigned spot, by class, and wait for an aide to dismiss them into the building. Mrs. R. is already in the room at her desk, and as the students enter she begins to address questions and concerns from students. Students are fairly noisy as they put away their coats and unpack their backpacks. A few students inform Mrs. R. that some of the boys, including Jeff, Paco, Drew, and Max were chasing girls on the playground, upsetting them. This concerns Mrs. R. who has already dealt with a playground game of "pest control" in which several boys acted as "exterminators," chasing and tagging unwilling participants. Mrs. R. talks to the boys about their behavior being harassment because the girls did not want to play and asks the boys what they think should happen. They mention detention and writing a paragraph. Mrs. R. mentions that she thinks they should individually apologize to each girl bothered during the game. With it agreed that they will have detention and make an apology, the boys return to their seats (fieldnotes, 12/10/96). At 8:25 a.m., the last bell rings, students quiet, and the student patrol in the main office leads the whole school in the Pledge of Allegiance through the intercom. Just as they quiet down, Jeff stands up from

his seat and asks for everyone's attention. He tells the class that he was involved in chasing the girls, that it was wrong, and he is very sorry for his behavior. He promptly sits down and begins to cry. No other boys apologize, even after Mrs. R. goes over to Jeff and excuses him from detention because of his graceful apology. Mrs. R. then addresses the entire class, remarking that Jeff has shown great courage and she respects what he has done. This appears to also impact the other students, no one teases him for crying, and several remark through the morning that Jeff was brave, and they could not have made a public apology. Mrs. R. sees this occurrence (the public apology and subsequent admiration) as a major event in her attempts to encourage students to respect others and to accept responsibility for the welfare of others, and for their own behavior.

With this issue settled and with little encouragement from Mrs. R., students settle themselves in and begin to work on the daily challenges written on the board at the front of the room, along with the day's schedule. The language arts challenge includes two sentences about the need to write thank-you notes to the first graders who raised money to send Rover, the class mascot, to the White House. The language arts challenge usually contains pertinent class information or information about Mrs. R.'s family. The sentences contain several spelling and grammatical errors that students need to correct (fieldnotes, 10/7/96). The sentences are to be written in one of two ways, correct or incorrect with editor's marks. On the first day of school, Mrs. R. explained these two options and told the students, "It's your choice" of how you wish to write them (fieldnotes, 8/28/96). The math challenge is a problem where students substitute numbers and letters in an equation. While most students are working on the challenges, several others are working at their jobs. Scotty is taking the lunch count, recording each student's selection. When finished, he says, "Thank you" to the class and takes the information down to the cafeteria (fieldnotes, 10/7/96). When Scotty first took this job, he was frequently unable to finish his challenges because he was doing the lunch count. Mrs. R. says she did not "cut him any slack" because she wants him to better budget his time (fieldnotes, 8/30/96). As the semester progresses, Scotty learns to come into the room and begin working on the challenges even before the last bell rings. This is also true for Shelly whose job is to put papers into student mailboxes and has found she needs to better budget her time in order

to get the challenges done (10/21/96). Other students working at their jobs are Lisa, who changes the calendar, and Stephanie, who is taking attendance. Stephanie, like most students, can explain her job and provide a rationale for why it is important. Stephanie says, "...attendance clerk...fills out the sheets if someone is absent and the office needs to know about that because they need to put it down so the teachers know how many times they have been absent..." (student interview #6, 2/18/97). One student, Robyn, was fired from her job as payroll clerk because she did not get the paychecks written on time each week (student interview #5, 2/18/97). Robyn seems unconcerned, and admits that she has a new job (door closer) because she did not do her other job responsibly.

Once everyone has individually finished the challenges, Mrs. R. goes over them with the students and when done tells them, "It took a lot of cooperative work to do this and you worked together well" (fieldnotes, 10/8/96). The morning meeting is then called and Mrs. R. and the students move to the tiled area of the room where they all sit in a circle on the floor. As they are getting settled, an empty desk is accidentally knocked over and the boys responsible set the desk upright. Mrs. R. asks them to check for damage and the boys examine the desk and the tile floor (fieldnotes, 10/7/96). She encourages this sense of responsibility not only to the people in the community, but also to community and personal property. She does this by helping students recognize opportunities to be responsible, and, by conscious modeling, what she believes is responsible behavior and indicative of good citizenship (Mrs. R. interview, 2/26/97). The first item for the morning meeting is to go over the Weekly Plan Sheet (WPS) which contains a breakdown of major assignments for the upcoming week, as well as student and staff birthdays or other special events. The WPS is distributed every Monday morning and discussed, although not always in the meeting format. One of the specific reasons Mrs. R. goes over the WPS and writes each day's schedule on the board is so students will realize that they can suggest changes; that they do have a choice in the classroom (interview, 2/26/97). This opportunity for input is a conscious decision by Mrs. R. to create a classroom with democratic elements such as choice and decision-making. The next item for discussion is the list of questions that Rover will be taking with him to the White House (fieldnotes, 10/9/96). The list of questions had been generated in a discussion the previous day and

when that discussion ended, the class was trying to combine some of the questions. Today, Mrs. R. has brought in the list of questions that she has refined. The questions are very similar to what the students generated, but some have been combined or reworked into more complex questions. She reads them aloud and asks students what they think. Jeff asks about these refinements and the wording changes, saying that these are not the exact questions they came up with yesterday. Mrs. R. tells him she did this to avoid yes/no answers and hopes this will encourage more of a response from the White House. There are no other questions and Mrs. R. asks if the list is all right. The students nod their approval. Mrs. R. moves on to the last item for the meeting which is for students to share celebrations (fieldnotes, 10/7/96). During this part of the meeting, students raise their hands and when called upon say something positive that has happened in their lives. After volunteers explain their particular celebration there is some applause and words of congratulations or support from Mrs. R. (fieldnotes, 10/7/96). With the meeting over, students return to their seats and Wayne and another boy rearrange the tables and desks displaced without being asked. They receive a thank you from Mrs. R.

Spelling is the next item on the day's schedule and the first spelling assignment of the week includes each student being assigned a word from the list, looking up its meaning and being able to use the word correctly in a sentence. As the assignment proceeds, a few students have difficulty creating a sentence and Mrs. R. asks, "Can anyone help Rick (or Cindy, etc.) with his (her) sentence?" (fieldnotes, 10/14/96, 11/18/96). Mrs. R. may also request that the student having trouble choose a classmate to help (fieldnotes, 12/18/96). A request for help or a suggestion to ask for help is very common in room 23 and the students see helpfulness as a main criteria for good citizenship (student interviews #1 - #6, 2/17/97 & 2/18/97). In two separate interviews, Dominique and Jeff specifically mentioned helping others in the classroom as a part of good citizenship. This focus on helping as a part of citizenship is also mentioned in 16 of 22 citizenship essays the students wrote in September, and in the class constitution (room 23 artifact collection).

After spelling, social studies is the next subject under study and Mrs. R. tells the students the page number, with the remark to check your neighbor to see if he or she is on the right page (fieldnotes, 10/14/96). Mrs. R. and the students take turns reading aloud

the assigned section about early exploration of North America. When finished, Mrs. R. hands Amber multiple copies of a magazine that has an article dispelling popular myths about Pocahontas. Paper passer is Amber's job and she is usually up and ready to work before being asked. While Amber distributes the magazines, Mrs. R tells the students that a friend has loaned her these copies, and asks the students to be careful; they are. Students are then told they can read with a buddy, if they choose. She also reminds them to "make a wise choice" when selecting a partner (fieldnotes, 12/11/96). Most students pair up and find a quiet place to read, although a few choose to read alone.

Math is the last subject on the schedule before lunch and Mrs. R. teaches a brief follow-up lesson on multiplying double and triple digit numbers. After the homework assignment is made, Mrs. R. tells the students they will be working in one of two groups. Group one people understand this lesson; and group two people still need some help. She says, "You choose which group you want to be in" (fieldnotes, 10/30/96). Once the students have sorted themselves into the two groups, Mrs. R. makes partner assignments for the work and tells them to see her when and if they finish. As the partners finish and turn in their work, they approach Mrs. R. for direction. She asks about the completeness of the morning's assignments, and asks the students, "You have a choice. What would you like to work on next?" (fieldnotes, 8/28/96, 10/18/96, 10/30/96, 11/13/96). If they are finished with their homework, there are learning center activities or math games they are encouraged to explore. These suggestions are often accompanied by the comment of "Be courteous to your neighbor [regarding noise]" (fieldnotes, 12/10/96). This is standard procedure, and by early November, many students are routinely finding work to do without direction. Paco, whose job is to record bank transactions, is catching up on those records (fieldnotes, 11/15/96). Max, without direction, has gotten a math game to play. Garth remarks that he did not ask first, to which Max replies that he can play math games if it will keep him out of trouble (fieldnotes, 10/21/96). In the time remaining before lunch, the students work on a variety of tasks. Dr. Simmons (the principal) stops by the room and sits down at a table with a group of students playing a learning center game (fieldnotes, 10/14/96). She chats with them, observing and asking questions about the topic under study. She stays for about 10 minutes with this group before leaving.

When directed, the students line up for lunch. This has to be done in alphabetical order for the cafeteria workers, and today line-up does not go smoothly. Students are doing a great deal of talking and shoving. Mrs. R. reminds them that if they do not line up respectful of democratic behavior (i.e., respect, fairness), they will lose the privileges of democracy. She asks if they like it when they lose those privileges; they respond with a chorus of "no." She then asks why they do not like to lose the privileges of democracy, to which they reply, "We can't do anything." Mrs. R. asks, "Why not?" The students reply, "We blew it" (fieldnotes, 11/13/96). In one student interview, Courtney talks about this establishment of consequences. She brings up the class constitution, which includes under the section on "Responsibilities:"

> "We will listen politely to each other.
> We won't use put-downs. We will use good manners.
> We will try to never hurt someone through our own actions.
> We will be fair" (room 23 artifact collection).

After bringing up the class constitution, she is asked if she has any specific comments about it. Courtney says, "It does help a few people, some of the kids in our class, [to] be better citizens in our class [and] to other people; and, it sometimes doesn't help and we've learned that if we don't obey the constitution, we will get in trouble" (student interview #6, 2/18/97). Mrs. R. reiterates this establishment of a democratic classroom and consequences:

> "I do try to run a democratic classroom. But there are times when the students see that in a democracy, citizens do have a responsibility to their society and that when the citizens fail in their responsibility to society, there tends to be a loss of rights and privileges, and maybe sometimes government becomes a little less democratic and there is a lesson in that, too" (interview 2/26/97).

Once the lunch line is quiet, Mrs. R. leads the students to the lunch room. Most of the teachers at Charles Lindbergh, including Mrs. R., lead the students, but walk backwards from the front of the line to monitor student behavior. By second semester, fourth and fifth graders have assigned seats in the cafeteria because of behavior. This is upsetting to students, particularly Katrina. In discussing whether or not the students of room 23 have a say in the classroom, Katrina repeatedly brings up the cafeteria saying, "...we don't get to exercise our rights..." and "we don't get to exercise like our freedom

of speech and the right to do what we feel..." (student interview #2, 2/17/97). Upon redirection to room 23 and having a say, Katrina says, "...we do usually, or all the time really..." (student interview #2, 2/17/97).

Lunch recess today is in the classroom because of bad weather. There is a recess aide monitoring both of the fifth grade classrooms, and students are doing a variety of things. Several are playing or chatting, while others are playing a math game or one of the educational board games Mrs. R. has in the room. Drew and Scotty are running around, but have not gotten in trouble. Some students are studying, including Dakota, Amber, and Shelly who have found a spot in the hallway to finish their math homework. When Mrs. R. returns to the room, she tells the girls she is glad to see them taking responsibility for getting their work done and finding a quiet place to work (fieldnotes, 12/18/96).

With lunch recess over, Mrs. R. quiets the students and prepares them for the reading assignment. Today's assignment includes practice reading a picture book aloud (fieldnotes, 12/11/96). Students will be meeting their kindergarten buddy class tomorrow, and instead of helping them in the computer lab, they will be reading to them. Yesterday, the fifth graders went to the library to choose a picture book. They are now asked to choose a partner and find a quiet place to practice reading aloud. Mrs. R. has provided a rationale, saying that difficult or new words do not always appear difficult when read silently. Reading aloud will allow them to find troublesome words. Pairs of students scatter through the room to practice. Wayne, Cliff, Sam, and Samantha practice holding the book out to the side, as they have seen teachers read to them. Sam, like many students, is reading with great feeling and emotion, adding different voices for characters in the book. Mrs. R. is pleased, noting that the students have met her objectives of cooperation and oral reading. After the students rotate partners, Mrs. R. calls them together and comments on the things she saw them do well. Once resettled in their seats, Amber passes out a language arts worksheet, and after an explanation from Mrs. R., student begin to work.

At 2:00, Paco passes out his birthday treats (fieldnotes, 12/10/96). Mrs. R. asks him to choose two helpers, and several students wish him a happy birthday as he distributes the treats. As usual, no one eats or drinks until everyone in the class has been

served. After looking around the room, one of the students asks Mrs. R. if they can eat, and she says, "I'm glad to see you are all waiting to eat, that is showing good manners" (fieldnotes, 10/30/96). Showing good manners is also a part of the class constitution section on Responsibilities and is frequently reinforced (room 23 artifact collection).

As treats are finished, students begin to pack up to go home. One part of the daily routine is for each student to complete a homework sheet which details everything they have done during the day. While Mrs. R. writes this list on the board, Amber passes out blank homework sheets. As each student copies the information down, he or she checks if it was completed at school or is homework. Courtney, whose job is homework monitor, is preparing one of these sheets for each student who is absent. Courtney believes her job is important because, "...if I didn't do it, then people...wouldn't get their work done. They would have a late list and I really don't want that to happen..." (student interview #6, 2/18/97). Once the information is on the board, Mrs. R. reminds the students to clean up all areas of the classroom, not just around their desks (fieldnotes, 10/14/96, 11/15/96, 12/10/96). This is often accompanied by a comment of being responsible for the whole community, not just their part. Student check-out begins and Mrs. R. reviews each student's homework sheet, makes any needed changes, and asks each student to check his or her mailbox. Students on safety patrol are the first to be dismissed, and when the students get a little noisy and it becomes difficult to hear, she tells them, "...we have got to work together to meet our responsibilities" (fieldnotes, 11/15/96). Patrols are dismissed and Mrs. R. has the rest of the class gather their belongings, put their chairs up on their desks, and line up. Cliff is chair monitor, and with a reminder from Mrs. R., puts up the extra chairs. School is dismissed at 2:45 p.m.

CONCLUSIONS

Both of the classrooms in this study contain a variety of democratic elements, and may be considered more democratic than less democratic. Very few classrooms are completely democratic; rather, they tend to operate on a continuum from more democratic to less democratic (VanSickle, 1983, p. 52). A more democratic classroom includes opportunities for the students to influence the decisions of the teacher and is characterized by students who participate in the decisions of the classroom. The less democratic

classroom is highly centralized, and the teacher makes the majority of the decisions for the classroom with little or no input from the students. A more democratic classroom philosophy is consistent with the beliefs and practices of both Mr. L. and Mrs. R. who believe that as the trained professional in the classroom, there are certain decisions that must be made by the teacher. Although both teachers believe that it is very important to provide democratic experience in the classroom, neither teacher believes that his or her classroom should be completely democratic (Mr. L. interview #1, 9/10/96 & Mrs. R. interview, 2/26/97). Both teachers believe there are multiple ways for their students to experience democracy in the classroom. By providing real and meaningful student choice, shared responsibility, shared decision-making, and deliberate opportunities for civic participation, these two teachers have created more democratic classrooms. There are differences between Mr. L. and Mrs. R. in how some of these democratic elements are presented and introduced. This appears to affect the degree to which the students believe they are involved in the classroom (i.e., that it is democratic). This difference appears to account for much of the difference in perceptions.

Choice, shared responsibility, shared decision-making, and deliberate opportunities for civic participation occurred consistently in both of the classrooms under study. However, these democratic elements appeared with more structure and deliberate intent in Mrs. R.'s room than in Mr. L.'s room. The students in Mrs. R.'s classroom are also more aware of their responsibilities than the students in Mr. L.'s classroom. The characteristics of structure, common vocabulary, and repetition seem to be significant in the differences between these two classrooms.

The first characteristic, the presence of structured opportunities, occurred more frequently and with more structure in Mrs. R.'s classroom than in Mr. L.'s classroom. The mini-economy is one example of this structured opportunity. It is a very concrete and deliberately staged opportunity for students to experience life as a citizen with the responsibilities of a job and the benefits and responsibilities of a salary. Students may experience the consequences of not performing their job well. They may lose their job and others in the community may suffer because of their failings. Structure also occurs in both classrooms as specific opportunities for choice are created by the teacher.

A second characteristic, a common vocabulary, may also be important. Related to structure, a common vocabulary is used by both teachers with their classes. Both teachers refer to the classroom as a community, to community members, and to responsibility to the community. In addition, Mrs. R. consistently uses the core democratic values with her students in conversation and across disciplines. The values of justice, common good, individual rights, patriotism, truth, diversity, and equality of opportunity are a part of the daily vocabulary and are visible in the classroom on student created posters. Mrs. R. consistently uses these terms in academic discussions with her students and in matters of classroom management. If students are talking disruptively, Mrs. R. does not say, "Be quiet." Rather, she says, "Your talking is infringing upon the individual right of Katrina [or whomever] to study."

Repetition is the third characteristic more frequently present in Mrs. R.'s classroom than in Mr. L.'s classroom. Repetition is certainly related to structure and a common vocabulary as Mrs. R. repeatedly and consistently offers structured opportunities and uses a common vocabulary with her students.

Elementary students do not seem to commit to democracy when it is presented passively. Results of this study further conclude that opportunities to use the knowledge, skills, and attitudes must be presented with structure, deliberately, and repeatedly. It is hoped that this will encourage the "habits of mind" promoted by Dewey (1916/1994), p. 99). More democratic classrooms promote community responsibility, and a real sense of community is essential in participatory citizenship education. Teachers wishing to encourage this responsibility and sense of community should share the classroom with their students. Allowing students to become responsible in the classroom through rule-setting, classroom jobs, choice in assignments, etc. encourages responsibility to that classroom community. Students who have helped set the environment for the classroom are more committed to the success of that classroom. The next question may be: If we can encourage student commitment to the classroom community, how do we encourage sustained commitment to the larger community?

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